

ILLUSTRATIVE  
ANSWERS  
TO  
PRAYER

—  
TRUMBULL.

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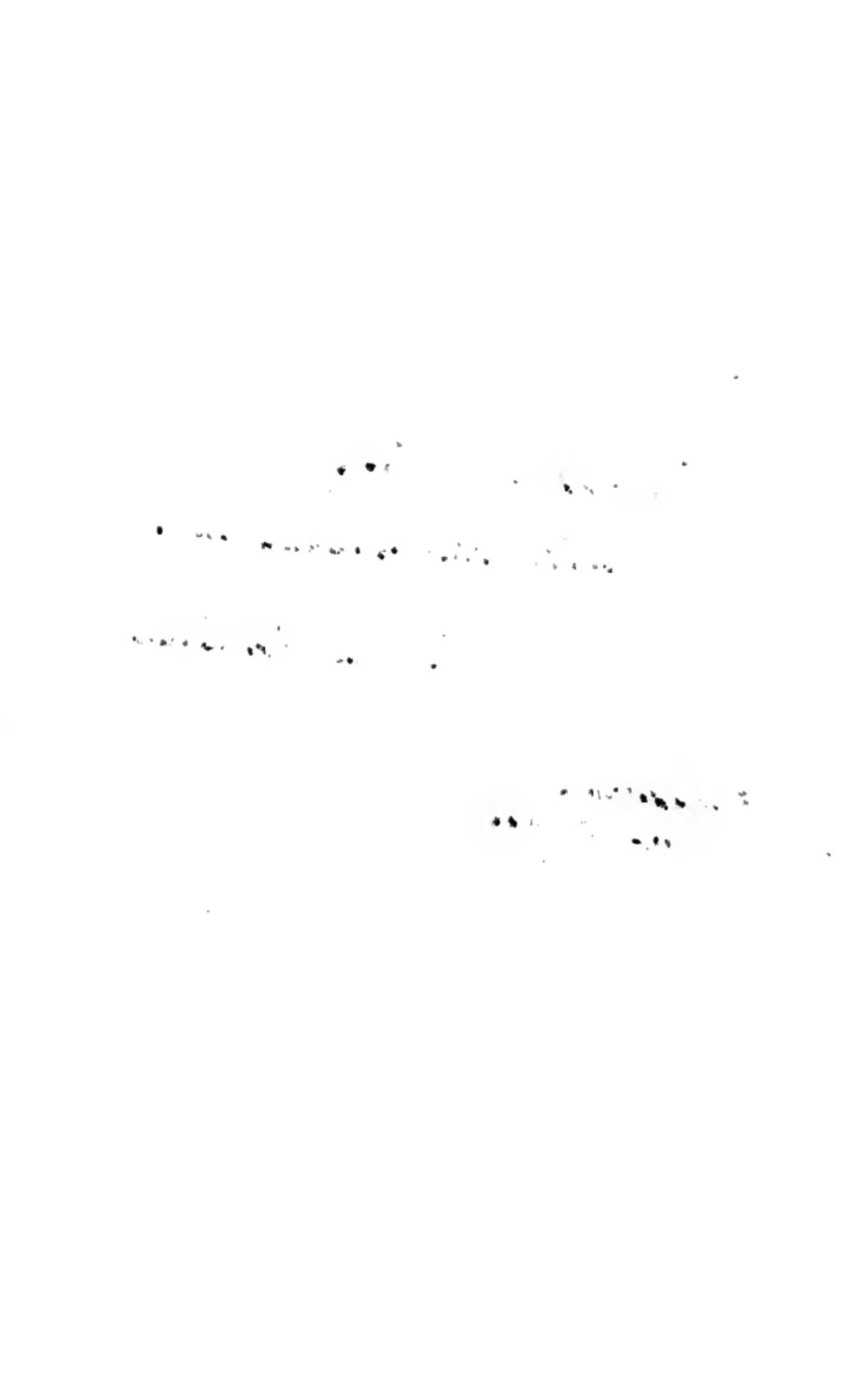


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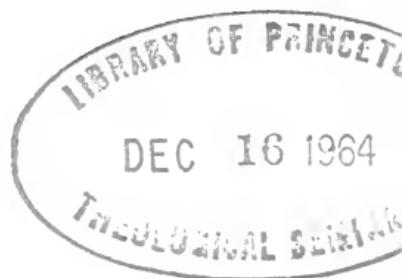
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# ILLUSTRATIVE ANSWERS TO PRAYER

A RECORD OF PERSONAL  
EXPERIENCES



BY

H. CLAY TRUMBULL

Author of "Prayer: Its Nature and Scope;" "War  
Memories of an Army Chaplain," etc.

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**H. CLAY TRUMBULL**

## Preface

If any are unwilling to believe that God hears the particular prayers of his trustful children, and is ready to grant them special answers, proportioned to their needs and their faith, these pages are not for them. These narrations are not offered as proof of the unprovable; they are not written to change the belief, or the non-belief, of unbelievers.

If, however, any are glad to be reassured, by the testimony of a brother believer and fellow-disciple, of the truth that our Father in heaven is as ready now as in Bible days to hear and to answer the prayers of his earthly children, according to their need and their faith, these pages are for them. These narrations are proffered as testimonies of one who knows whom he has believed, and who has had constant and repeated experience of his Father's un-

## Preface

varying love. They are offered in the hope that they will encourage and strengthen the faith of readers who do believe.

In a former volume, entitled "Prayer: Its Nature and Scope," I have given my views of prayer, its duty, its essential limitations, its privileges, its perils, and its comforts. In this volume I record some of my personal experiences, or the experiences of those whom I have known or known of, as illustrative of such prayer as God welcomes and honors on the part of those who feel their need of him, and who trust him according to his word. The two volumes really belong together, each being, in a sense, the complement of the other.

I send out this volume, like the other, with the prayer that God will bless it to its readers according as its teachings are sanctioned by his Word and Spirit.

H. C. T.

PHILADELPHIA,  
*June 8, 1900.*

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# I

## Expecting Answers to Prayer

God is the same yesterday and to-day and forever. The Bible record abounds with illustrations of specific answers to explicit prayers by those who called upon God in their need, and who, in his service, were answered according to their needs and their trust.

The same God who gave answer to the prayers of Abraham and Jacob and Moses and Gideon and David and Elijah and Peter and Paul and Cornelius, according to the Bible record, is as ready to give answer, according to his promises, in our day as in theirs. A host of living witnesses can bear testimony to God's unvarying fidelity in this sphere of his universal sway.

All this is strictly within the operation of natural laws, as God sees and controls natural laws, although in finite man it re-

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quires the eye of faith to perceive that the natural is subordinate continually to the supernatural. The trustful child of God can realize that, according to God's ordering, faith-filled prayer is as truly one of the providential forces in nature as is electricity; and that, in conformity with the letter and spirit of God's promises with reference to such prayer, the greater force may as truly operate, on occasions, for the advantage of a particular child of God, as does the lesser force when that child sends a personal message and receives a specific answer over the wires of the telegraph or of the long-distance telephone.

One who believes that the "laws of nature," by their very mention, presuppose the existence and control of an intelligent Lawgiver, cannot conceive of that Lawgiver as unable or unwilling to have his laws operate in particular providences, as well as in general, for the help of those who come to him in accordance with his specific directions. Reasonable men must

## Expecting Answers to Prayer

believe that God can control and direct his laws at least as well as man can control and direct laws which he makes. Therefore it is that so many of God's children come to their Father in faith-filled prayer, expecting to receive specific answers to their prayers, and are not disappointed.

Faith rests not on prayer, but on God. Prayer is merely one of the means of communicating with God; yet prayer is not the only means. Faith is more than reason, but faith is ever reasonable. As Dr. Mark Hopkins expressed it: "Faith takes God at his word, and surely that is reasonable. It is the most reasonable thing in the world to believe that God will do as he has promised." Such reasonable faith is the basis of all proper prayer.

God's specific promises of answer to faith-filled prayer, as given by Jesus Christ to his disciples, are none of them unconditional and absolute. All of them have well-defined limitations within their very

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form and letter, which limitations are as important as the main promise itself. Yet, strange though this be, the limitations affixed to Christ's specific promises of answer to prayer are often ignored by his professed followers when they would seek or claim an answer to prayer; and because of this ignoring they wonder or doubt as to the uncertainty that seems to attach to the promise.<sup>1</sup>

The personal testimony borne in the following pages to God's fidelity to his promises in particular instances is offered, not to prove to doubters that God is ever as good as his word, but to confirm the faith of those who believe, and who are glad to have their imperfect trust confirmed.

<sup>1</sup> See *Prayer: Its Nature and Scope*, by same Author, for a treatment of "Prayer a Providential Force in God's Plan," "What to Pray for, and Why," "Limitations of the Right of Prayer," "Praying in Faith better than Faith in Prayer," "Mistaking Presumption for Faith," etc.

## II

### Boyhood Lessons of Trust in God

What can be firmer as the basis of a boy's intelligent faith in God than the explicit promises of his Father in heaven assured to him by a godly mother, and confirmed by her testimony as to that Father's readiness to make good his word in our day and sphere? Such a basis was given to me in my boyhood days by my mother, and that basis has not failed me from then until now.

Bible promises and Bible stories were told to me by my faithful and faith-filled mother before I had read them for myself; and they seemed all the truer to me because she said they were true, and surely I could never question or doubt my mother or my mother's words! Then she added to the sure promises of God her confident testimony of much that she had

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known of God's willingness to hear and to answer the prayers of his children in their need and their faith, and she enjoined it on me to trust God ever accordingly. Thus I came to know and to trust Him who, in our dependence and need, is ready to minister to his children "as one whom his mother comforteth." One incident which my mother recited to me out of the experience of a neighbor of hers, impressed indelibly upon my mind the truth that God is, in our day, the God of the widow and the fatherless, as ready to hear and to answer faith-filled prayers as he was in the days of Elijah and Elisha.

My boyhood's home was on the New England seacoast, at a point where Long Island Sound opens into the Atlantic Ocean. Seventy-five or a hundred years ago there was, in a New England village, no such wide distance between the rich and the poor as nowadays there is in many a prosperous community. Few families had household servants. Servants, indeed, were

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not then known there as a class. Families who were "better off" than their neighbors were accustomed to call on the women and girls of those neighbors to act as "help" in household work, such as washing and baking and house-cleaning and sewing and nursing. Men and boys who were not in any particular trade, or who were not on the water as sailors or coasters, were accustomed to do service for their well-to-do neighbors as "help" in planting and harvesting and wood-chopping, and other odd jobs. Thus, while most were enabled to get along day by day moderately well, there was at times a family where a widow and her fatherless children, or others, would, through special circumstances, be pressed for means of support beyond the knowledge of their neighbors.

Such a family lived not far from my mother and grandmother, in a house often pointed out to me as I heard the story afterward. The mother and her two children served and trusted God, and did the

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best they could for themselves, as they found opportunity, in doing such work as their neighbors could furnish them. But at one time the mother found herself in extremity. As a stormy night shut in she had not a particle of food for the next day's need. When they lay down that night, she prayed with her children, without telling them of her helplessness—for, indeed, she was not helpless while she trusted God as her helper. With the new, bright morning the mother prayed for their daily bread, assured that her Father could supply it—as he alone knew how.

She asked her children to go down to the shore before breakfast, and get some clean sand from the beach for their sitting-room floor. Before the days of woolen carpets, in the humbler New England homes they were accustomed to strew sand on the floor, and to ornament the borders by arranging it in figures with a broom. When the children had gone, the mother again kneeled and prayed for their daily.

## Boyhood Lessons of Trust in God

bread. After this she spread the breakfast-table, for which she had no food.

Suddenly the children returned without the sand, but bringing gleefully a fine fish, which they had found in a hollow of the beach, as left by the outgoing tide after the storm, and which they together had captured. As with a grateful heart she thanked God for his goodness, and began to prepare the fish for their breakfast, she was called to the door by a visitor.

A man from the country above the village had called to say that on one occasion her husband, now dead, had done some work for this man for which he had not been paid. The man had now brought a bushel and a half of corn-meal to give the widow on account, promising to bring more by and by. As with swelling heart the mother thanked the donor, and brought the meal into their now doubly glad home, she told the children of how God had answered her prayer, and they kneeled together to give him thanks.

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Then she hastily made a "johnny-cake" of the Indian-meal, and baked it by the fire, while she broiled the fish for their breakfast. Together they asked God's blessing on that God-given meal, and thenceforward they served and trusted God more fully and joyously than ever.

The village neighbors, when they learned of God's care of one whom they had unintentionally neglected, resolved henceforth to minister more faithfully to her whom God had privileged to represent him in their community. When I heard that story from my dear mother, it didn't seem any more strange, or any less true, than the Bible stories. Indeed, it didn't seem so very strange anyway. It seemed just like God. And I think so still. I've never had reason to think differently.

### III

## Sleighting that Strengthened my Faith

When, in my young manhood, I came openly and actively into God's special service, the faith side of my nature was stronger than the love side. Had I been always as ready and willing to enter on and continue in the path of duty as I was to recognize the fact that God called me to do this, and that he was ready to sustain me in it, I should have been a better child of God in all these years. What I now testify to, therefore, is that God was ever ready to give me guidance and help in answer to prayer, not that I was always willing to be guided of God, and to serve him faithfully.

My first special work in God's service, when I had newly consecrated myself to him, in the spring of 1852, was as the

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superintendent of the Morgan Street Mission School in Hartford, Connecticut, just then started among the poor and the vicious, in an old rickety building near the river side. I had been called to that work by a summons as unexpected and as positive as that which Elijah gave to Elisha when he took him from his plow; and I had no more reason than had Elisha to doubt that it was God's wish for the called layman to enter his special service just then and there.

My very first address to the little band of workers, in that garret-room mission school, was based on the words of Jesus, as recorded in Mark 11 : 22-25 : "Have faith in God. . . . Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." This was before I had been chosen to the superintendency of the school, and, as I afterwards learned, it was one of the reasons that led to my call to that position. At all events, I early found

## **Sighting that Strengthened my Faith**

myself recognized by the teachers as a firm believer in God's readiness to hear and answer faith-filled prayer, now as of old. This laid upon me a special responsibility for practicing as I preached among that band of young workers for Christ. And an unsought and unexpected occasion arose for putting my belief to a test before them.

Early in the history of our school one of our larger boys was sent to the state prison for setting fire to an old building in the neighborhood in order to bring out the volunteer fire department with which he was connected. As others of our larger boys might be counted as, in a sense, candidates for the state prison, we were desirous of making use of this unfortunate occurrence as a warning to our charge. When, later, a Christmas celebration was talked of, we had this matter to consider in connection with our movements.

As a band of teachers we came together and prayed earnestly for special guidance

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

in our plans. We asked God particularly to show us what we should do on the coming Christmas to enable us to impress our pupils for good while they were in our charge. Then, after consultation, we decided to arrange a sleigh-ride for all hands, on Christmas morning, to Wethersfield, a few miles below Hartford. After passing through the several prison departments there, we would have a meeting in the prison chapel, with fitting addresses and warnings. Returning to Hartford at noon, we would give the pupils a dinner in the old City Hall, which we had obtained consent to use for the day. This plan met with the approval of all, and we proceeded with our necessary arrangements.

We had several meetings to complete the details, and at each of these we renewedly prayed for guidance. One evening a teacher abruptly suggested that possibly there would be no snow on Christmas, and, if so, all our plans would come to nought. Inexperienced as we

## Sleighbing that Strengthened my Faith

were in such matters, this possibility had not been considered by us. Quite a number of the teachers were startled.

In this emergency I ventured to say, without a thought of presumption, that, as we were in God's special service, and had been asking his guidance in our plans, we might confidently trust God for his part in the program for Christmas Day, and, as the weather was at his control, we need not doubt him concerning it.

"Oh, well!" spoke out one of the teachers; "if Mr. Trumbull will agree to furnish the snow for sleighing, we can safely go ahead with our arrangements."

"Mr. Trumbull doesn't propose to furnish the snow for sleighing on Christmas," I answered promptly. "He only suggests that, as we have been led of God to make plans in God's service, where snow for sleighing is a necessity, it seems to be a distrust of God to suggest that, while we do our part as God directs, he may not do his part."

## **Illustrative Answers to Prayer**

At this we went on with our arrangements. It is to be borne in mind in this narration that I am by no means defending my course in this matter as a wise or a proper one, but that I am simply recording God's loving dealings with me in his service when I emphasized, however unwiseley, the importance of trusting God to give an answer to our faith-filled prayers in his service.

When I went home from the meeting of teachers that evening, I realized the responsibility of my position in this emergency. Accordingly I went on my knees before God to call for guidance and help. I told God that if I had unintentionally erred in what I had said about the sleighing, I now prayed that the tender faith of those young teachers, whom I was set to lead in his service, might not be harmed through any error or presumption of mine. And from the evening I prayed, day by day, that we might be helped, through his leading, to a firmer faith in him.

## Sleighbing that Strengtbened my Faith

As Christmas drew near there were still no signs of snow. Yet we went on with our arrangements, as if we were sure of good sleighing. Repeatedly I checked attempts at discussion over the prospects of the weather as a matter outside of our control. On Christmas Eve we met for the last preliminary conference, and then we separated for the night with an agreement to meet at the school-room the next morning. At my home, as I looked out of my window before retiring, I saw a clear star-lit sky, but I knew that my Father was back of the sky and stars, and, committing the whole case to him trustfully, I lay down and slept.

Christmas morning I rose to find some four inches of snow on the ground,—a good basis for excellent sleighing. The sun was shining. I thanked God heartily, and prepared for the day. Everything passed off as we had hoped. We had our sleigh-ride to Wethersfield and our impressive service in the state-prison chapel.

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We came back in the middle of the day to have our dinner for the pupils in the old City Hall. When we entered that hall the snow was already melting on the ground. When we came out from that hall, after several hours there, the snow had practically disappeared; and, when the night shut in, the ground was again bare.

Those teachers felt that God had sent that snow to enable us to use it for his service as we had planned and prayed under his guidance. I have never had any doubt on that point.

More than forty years after that day one of the most prominent of those teachers, who had ever since been active in God's service, recalled gratefully that God-sent Christmas snowstorm, as we were together in the Adirondacks, and she spoke earnestly of the aid it had been to her faith at the time and thenceforward until now. I have never ceased to thank my loving Father for the aid he thus gave to the faith of those teachers, and to my faith.

## IV

### **Knowing God's Voice when he Speaks**

If prayer includes as one of its privileges *communion* with God, it follows that God has a part in this communion, as well as man. If a child of God confidently asks guidance from his Father, the Father may be expected to respond to the child with the special guidance sought. This seems a reasonable expectation on the child's part, and an expectation that seems justified by God's explicit teaching to his children, in both the Old Testament and the New. In all the ages God's most trustful children have felt that they could expect explicit direction in response to prayer, and multitudes of them have been ready to bear witness that they have not been disappointed.

God promised his people by the prophet Isaiah, as they had need and sought his

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

help, "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it; when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left" (Isa. 30 : 21.) Again God promised by his apostle James, "If any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing doubting: for he that doubteth is like the surge of the sea driven by the wind and tossed" (James 1 : 5, 6).

These promises I, like many another, early recognized as assured of God, and I was encouraged by them. Yet I knew that many had permitted themselves to be misled through not interpreting these promises aright, and I had to admit that one might fall into grievous error and unjustifiable excesses through fanaticism or folly, even while he supposed he was following God's literal counsel. I even saw that I was sometimes inclined to follow an impulse or an unreasonable impression as

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to my personal duty, when I really desired to act as God directed. Therefore I questioned in my mind whether I was being misled by an uncertain sound in my spiritual ears, and, if so, how this could be avoided.

While I was speaking of this subject, one day, with a friend known and prized from my boyhood, the Rev. Dr. Henry M. Parsons, then of Springfield, later of Boston and of Buffalo and of Toronto, he said to me suggestively: "Henry, it's a great thing to know the Lord's voice when he speaks to us, and not to mistake anything else for it." That utterance started me on a new train of thought, and I began to consider the limitations within which alone I might properly expect to hear God's voice directing me. These recognized limits have helped me ever since to exclude what might otherwise have been a cause of my frequent misleading.

**In the first place, we have no right to**

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seek special guidance from God when our plain duty for the hour is already pointed out in the teachings of his Word, or in the circumstances of our position or relations. We need not ask God whether we shall love our parents or our children, or be good citizens, or give help to those who need it, and who apply to us for what we have to give. Nor need we ask God to tell us whether we are to work or to sleep or to eat or to take exercise at proper hours. If escaping gas fouls the atmosphere of a close room, we ought to know that opening a window to the fresh air is our duty, without waiting for any new revelation from God. Only within reasonable limits, and then where we are otherwise unable to know just in what way we are to act, is it proper for us to ask God's added and special help and guidance in our sphere.

In the next place, it is evident that God will never contradict himself. Having laid down in his Word well-defined principles for our guidance, God will never call on us

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to act otherwise than in accordance with those principles. "God is not a God of confusion," but of order and of peace. Where our duty is already clear, we may be sure that nothing is from God that would tempt us to do differently. This shuts out all wrong-doing as possibly directed of God.

Then, again, no call can be from God when it would seemingly summon us to a new duty while we are already in the discharge of a particular duty in God's providence with which the new task would conflict. Thus, for example, if we had left our home to summon the doctor for a sick member of our family, we might know that God would not call us on the way to turn aside and visit a needy neighbor in order to give sympathy or help. God is never in such extremity that he has to call one child of his to two conflicting duties,—if, indeed, duties ever do conflict.

The limitations indicated by such guarding principles as these practically shut out

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most of the difficulties which might lead one amiss in supposing that a guiding voice came from God in answer to special prayer. In all the years that followed this decision I have had little hesitation in accepting God's voice as God's voice, while I have had frequent occasion to hear and to heed that voice in little matters and in greater. I give a few illustrations out of many that I might give as showing how good it is to know God's voice and to conform to its teachings.

I was at work at my library table in Hartford one evening. I had just finished a piece of work for a Sunday-school magazine in Chicago. I had definitely promised the article, and it must be mailed that evening in order to be on time. I was, moreover, to leave home on the midnight train for Boston in order to fill an important religious appointment on the next day. As I was folding my finished Chicago manuscript I was startled by hearing a cry of pain from my wife in the room above

## **Knowing God's Voice when he Speaks**

me. Starting from my seat, I bounded upstairs to my wife's assistance. She had burned her hand slightly with a spirit-lamp. Having assisted her in its treatment, I returned to my library; but my finished manuscript was not to be found.

After searching the table and the floor for it, I went upstairs again to see if by any possibility I had taken it with me, or dropped it on the way. Then I searched my eight or ten pockets, thinking that I might have slipped it into one of these as I sprang at the cry of pain. But still it was not to be found. The time approached for my start for Boston. The manuscript for Chicago must be mailed before I left. I was in extremity, and I realized it. So I dropped on my knees at my study table, and called on God for help.

I am accustomed at such a time to state fully the case to my God, as if to convince myself that I am not shirking any duty, but am doing as I am entitled to do in his service. I told God that all this had

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occurred while I was at work as his child. The manuscript was for him; so was my jumping to my wife's relief, so also was my purposed trip to Boston. Moreover, I had exhausted my efforts to recover the paper, which must be found at once. He could help me. What should I do? At once there came the familiar voice to me, or the mental impression as if a voice had said:

“Stand up, and throw off your coat and vest.”

No explanation was added. I asked for none, but instantly I did as I was directed. As my vest was turned back I discovered the missing manuscript in a pocket in the inner lining of that vest, which I had not before known was there. Without stopping even to wonder over the incident I dropped again on my knees, and gave God thanks for his goodness; then I hurried on my way to Boston, mailing the paper as I went.

A little subsequent thought made the probable course of events clear to my

## **Knowing God's Voice when he Speaks**

mind, yet without lessening the importance of God's special ministry in it all. My coat had been buttoned over my vest as I rose from my chair at the call for help in the upper room. I had instinctively attempted to put the paper into the right breast-pocket of my coat. Unintentionally, I had slipped it inside the vest as well as the coat, and it had entered the pocket of which I was not aware. Up to that time I had never known of such a pocket, although I afterwards found that such pockets were common.

While this was all within the realm of the natural, I was none the less helpless to find the missing paper within the time allowed me; and I needed God's supernatural oversight of the natural in order to enable me to do my duty for him in my little sphere. And he came to my relief with his guiding voice, as he is ever ready to do for his children, according to their need and their faith.

At another time, I was one day making

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

arrangements to leave my Hartford home, in the evening, for a long trip to the North and West, in the line of my Sunday-school evangelistic work. I called at the bank, and drew a sum of money sufficient for my expenses while absent. I attended to various other matters at different places. Near the close of the day, at my home, I desired to use a portion of the money I had drawn, but, to my surprise, I could not find it. In vain I tried to recall where I had put it. I remembered taking it from the teller, at his window, but all after that was a blank in my mind with reference to it. I had been at various points in the city, and I had been in different parts of my house; but I knew of no one place more than another where I might hope to find the missing money.

In my extremity I asked, on my knees, for God's help. I told him that this money was his, and that I had not intentionally been careless with reference to it. I could not find it, nor did I know where to look.

## **Knowing God's Voice when he Speaks**

Would he direct me? At once the word came:

"Go down the kitchen stairs, and look on the cellar floor."

Rising, and doing as directed, I found the roll of bank-notes on the cellar floor, near the foot of the stairs. I thanked God for his goodness, and determined to be more careful the next time in putting any money I drew from the bank in a safe place at the start.

How the roll of notes came to be where I found it, I do not know, nor was it for me to explain; it may be that I put the money loosely in my vest-pocket when I received it from the teller, and that it remained there until it slipped out, as I went down the kitchen stairs in my going about the house. All was, I suppose, in the line of natural laws supernaturally controlled for the good of a trustful child of God. This again is but one instance out of many of God's loving dealings with me, for which I am profoundly grateful.

## **Illustrative Answers to Prayer**

Nor is it in matters of material things only that we can have God's guiding voice in our need. In things spiritual, also, we are privileged to commune with God and be helped. God is as ready to give comfort or salvation to a trusting soul as he is to give help and direction to one who looks for lost treasure. And with God there is no such measure as with man as to things great or small, easy or difficult. Of this also I have had rich experience, and to this I bear glad testimony.

For example, at one time I found myself disturbed and worried over a strange temptation in my thoughts. It hindered me in my reading, in my writing, and in my thinking. I could not shut it out from my mind, try I never so earnestly. Yet I could not see how I was directly responsible for its constant presence with me. I wanted to get away from it, or to get it away from me.

In my dilemma, after several days of struggling, I called on God for special help,

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or I communed with him in my perplexity. I asked God why I should have this special trouble, when I wanted my mind free for his assigned work in my sphere. I asked if he would not interpose and give me relief. Could he not take that temptation away? At once there came this unexpected response:

“Of course, I can instantly relieve you from this struggle. But which would you prefer,—to keep on with this fight for victory over the temptation in the strength that I will give you, and be the gainer in true manhood through the struggle, or to be wholly relieved at once from the conflict, and be so much less of a man in consequence?”

When that was the issue before me, I called out to God earnestly: “Let me be no less of a man than I am. If that be the choice, let this fight go on, and I be the gainer, in thy strength, through it all.”

Yet, strange to say, from that moment I had no more trouble with that temptation.

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Perhaps it was because I had now learned the lesson God would teach me by it, and other lessons were to be taught me in other ways. How good God is, and how tender and considerate with his children in their weakness and their needs, as they come to him in communing prayer!

## V

### **Children Guided on a Scotch Moor**

Although in these narrations I naturally emphasize my personal experience of God's loving guidance in answer to prayer, this is not because I feel that I have had such guidance above others of my acquaintance. Indeed, as illustrated by my mother's neighbor, the needy widow of whom I tell, for whom God made such remarkable provision in her extremity, God's ministry to others of his children whom I have personally known, or have known of, has, along my life course, strengthened my faith in him as ready to do for me according to my need and faith. And as their testimony has tended to give me cheer, I gladly give my testimony, in the hope that it will give others cheer. If all who have been thus providentially ministered to should bear

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their testimony, the world would ring anew with the praises of God's goodness.

On one occasion this subject of explicit answers to specific prayer came up for consideration in the Hartford Ministers' Meeting, at its weekly session, on Monday morning, when I was present. There were great and grand and good men in that gathering. I wish that the personal testimonies given that morning could have been preserved for the comfort of the saints. Prominent among these testimonies I recall particularly the impressive words of Professor Calvin E. Stowe, Dr. Horace Bushnell, Dr. Robert Turnbull, and Dr. Nathaniel J. Burton, all long since passed to their reward. The incident related out of his boyhood experience by Dr. Turnbull I repeat as more directly in the line of my present thought, that God is ready to give sought-for guidance, by his directing voice or otherwise, according to his trusting child's need.

Dr. Robert Turnbull, the distinguished

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author and preacher, of Philadelphia, Boston, and Hartford, did not remove to America until he was nearly twenty-five years old. It was while he was still a little boy in his Scottish home that the incident occurred of which he told us that memorable Monday morning.

On a wintry day Robert and his little sister strayed out from their home for a walk on the moor. As it drew toward dark, on the short winter's day, a driving snowstorm came on. Soon the children were blinded and dazed by the chilly storm. With no well-defined road over the moor, and with all landmarks shut out from sight by the falling snow, the children were soon bewildered. As they looked about them, and turned from side to side in search of the way, they quickly lost all knowledge of the points of compass, and were helpless as to the direction they should take. They realized that they had lost their way, and they dared not move in any direction. Yet these were children

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who had been taught that their Father in heaven could help them.

"Robbie, let us pray," said the sister; and they dropped together on their knees on the snowy moor, as if in their home bedroom.

"We only knew 'the Lord's Prayer,'" said Dr. Turnbull, as he told the story; "and we said that prayer together. But God knew that we really meant, 'Please show us the way home;' and he answered us accordingly.

"As we rose from our knees and peered about through the driving snow, my sister, keener-eyed in her faith, called out gaily: 'There's Old Maggie, Robbie. She'll show us the way.' And we sprang forward toward her, calling out as we pressed on, 'Maggie, Maggie.'"

"Old Maggie," said the narrator, "was a humble neighbor, and in a sense a dependent of ours, who was often at our house to perform service or to receive supplies. There she was just before us now in

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the driving snow, breasting the storm, with her plaid about her. As we called to her she did not look back, but pressed on, while we with our tired little feet followed after as best we could, glad of her safe lead. But suddenly Old Maggie disappeared. Bewildered again, we stopped and looked about us in the snow. To our wonder and delight, there just before us was our dear home which we were seeking. Maggie was gone. Her mission for now was performed. God had used her lead to answer our prayer that he would show us the way home."

As we looked into the Christ-lighted face of good Dr. Turnbull when he bore this testimony, we all felt that it was no mere fancy of the brain that had misled him. It was but an added evidence of God's goodness to his trustful children in their need, and we were glad that we also had such a loving Father. The impression of that recital has been with me ever since in all these years. And now, as the close

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of life's wintry day comes on, and the snows of age dim my eyes, I am glad of my confidence that my Father will not leave his child without a guide until I am finally in the place which he has prepared for me and for mine.

## VI

### **God Deciding my Place in War Time**

From the time when I first consciously gave myself to God's service, in my young manhood, I have never had reason to doubt, at any given time, that God wanted me to serve him in the place where I then was. Or, if he wanted me to enter a new field of service, he made that as plain to me as if he had spoken out of the heavens in thunder tones telling me where to go next. This has, of course, been a comfort to me in my life work, for which I am profoundly grateful. Such rest of faith as to one's sphere of service is, I believe, open to every child of God who seeks it in a sense of dependence and of confident trust.

Far be it from me to claim or to suggest that I have always felt that I was doing just right, or that I was uniformly even

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trying to do so. Many, very many, times I have failed, and known that I was failing, to do the best I could. I have not always even tried to do my best. This I have to confess; but, on the other hand, I have not had occasion, at such times, to doubt as to what and where was my sphere of duty in which I ought to be doing my best, or trying to do so.

The most desirable spot in the universe for a child of God is ever the spot where God wants that child to be. That point made clear to the child, he ought to feel that he would not gain, either in honor or in profit, by a change from where he is to another spot, whether it be to tend a cabbage field, to open up a diamond mine, or to evangelize a continent. God knows best what *he* wants, and what *we* ought to want. As to this, let us never have any doubt.

Hardly had I taken the step of formally entering God's service, when an unmistakable call from God, as I have already narrated, summoned me to superintend a

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city-mission school. From that time to the present every successive change of field for me has been as distinctly pointed out of God as was that first sphere of service. The indications of my duty and God's wish at the turning-point have been sometimes as remarkable as they were explicit. Some of these are worthy of recall in this recital of illustrative experiences of God's special guidance.

At the opening of the Civil War by the firing on Fort Sumter, in April, 1861, I was in active work in the Sunday-school missionary field in New England, to which I had been clearly called of God. The new emergency, in the summons to defend the government in its peril, seemed to me, as to most of the loyal able-bodied citizens of the North, to be a providential call to enlist in the army. But, unfortunately, I was not supposed to be an able-bodied citizen. I was in frail health, worn down by nervous effort in much traveling and speaking.

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When Governor Buckingham offered me the position of major in one of the earlier three years' regiments, and I referred the question of my physical fitness for the place to my physician, the latter assured me that my accepting it was quite out of the question. He said I could not live six weeks in army service. A younger and stalwart brother of mine, who had already enlisted, said that I could not live a single week in active service. He added that my accepting the position would only tend to keep out of it a man who could fill it. Thus I seemed shut out from army service by my physical incapacity.

In view of my prominence as a Sunday-school worker and lay preacher, the officers of the Tenth Connecticut Regiment, when it was making ready for the field, proposed to me to go as their chaplain; but, on taking counsel, I felt that that also was beyond my strength. In view of all the difficulties, therefore, I had to content myself with urging others to enlist, as I could

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not, and to this work I devoted myself enthusiastically. Of course, I was available in *this* line, at such a time, as an able-bodied speaker would not be. If any one whom I urged to enlist asked me why I did not myself volunteer, I was ready to reply that I would go at once if the government would accept me. Therefore my appeal came with greater force to others to do likewise. In this sphere, as a consequence, I had, for the time, plenty to do. Yet I regretted all the time that I was unfitted for more active service when such pressure was on all, and this feeling grew on me constantly. I was renewedly asking myself whether indeed it would not be possible for me to have some other share in the paramount duty of the loyal citizen in that crisis. This was not in the way of chafing under God's ordering, but it was in the way of dutifully inquiring just what God would have me to do with my limits as they were.

In the summer of 1862, after the terrible fighting in the seven days' battles before

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Richmond, and the new call was made for volunteers to replace losses in McClellan's army, the pressure on me was greater than before. One Saturday evening I returned to my home exhausted after a vigorous campaign through the towns of Hartford and Tolland counties, where I had accompanied Colonel Dwight Morris, of Bridgeport, commander of the new Fourteenth Regiment, appealing for volunteers.

Although it was near midnight when I reached home, instead of retiring to my room for sleep, I stopped in my parlor below stairs, and sat before the Lord for a season of communing with him. My own earnest appeals that evening to others to count their country's imperative call for help in its life struggle to be limited in their case only by their possibility of service, came back on my mind at this hour with tremendous force. I asked God earnestly if there was not something more that I could do in view of that summons.

In response the Lord seemed to ask me

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whether it did not seem decided that I lacked the physical ability to serve in either the field or line in the army. I said it did, but I had come to question more and more whether I might not do something as a chaplain or as a lay Christian worker in camp or hospital, even if I might not in more active service.

At this the Lord pointed me to the remark made by Colonel Morris that very evening as to the surplus of applicants for a chaplain's commission at the present time. He had told me that some thirty clergymen had applied to him for an appointment as chaplain. Therefore there was no special call on me to proffer my service in that line just now. But, I suggested, an unsolicited call had come to me a year ago from the officers of the Tenth Connecticut Regiment to be their chaplain. "Yes, but that regiment now has a chaplain. If the place proffered you a year ago were again before you, you might indeed count its acceptance a duty, but in the lack of such

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a call you must be contented as you are." And with this conclusion I had to rest the case at issue, and retire for the night.

Sunday, with its duties, followed that night. On Monday morning the first mail delivery brought me a letter from New Berne, North Carolina. It was from the colonel of the Tenth Connecticut Regiment, saying that their chaplain had resigned, and he now again proffered the position to me. He spoke of the needs of his regiment and of the military post where it was now stationed, and he suggested reasons why I should accept the call. The providence was too marked to leave me in any doubt as to God's purpose for me. From my library chair I called to my wife in the room above:

"Alice, God has called me to the war."

"Then I suppose you'll go" was the quiet response of the brave and patriotic and self-denying little woman.

And this was the way that God pointed out my place in army service.

## VII

### Led Unmistakably to the Editor's Chair

When I entered army service I was, and for four years I had been, in the service of the American Sunday School Union as the Sunday-school missionary for Connecticut. During my three years' absence in the army I was still counted as a representative of that society among the soldiers at the front. On my return I was appointed to the oversight of its missionary work in the New England field. Later I was appointed its Normal Secretary, in charge of its teacher-training work throughout the entire country.

The work of traveling from Maine to California, and from Minnesota to Florida, holding institutes and conventions and conferences, with an almost limitless amount of public speaking, became severely tax-

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ing to me. Naturally I began to question in my mind whether I could continue work of this kind as the years passed on, or whether I could do better work of another sort for a longer time by my undertaking labors like those of a writer or an editor at some center of influence. But, as to this, God knew better than I did, and I must leave it to him to indicate his will. Moreover, I was not by any means sure that I had the qualifications for such a place as that which I thought of. That also I must leave to God's decision and guidance.

In the early spring of 1875, just as I was leaving home to conduct an extended Sunday-school institute in Toronto, Canada, I heard that Mr. John Wanamaker, of Philadelphia, had purchased *The Sunday School Times*, and was seeking some well-known Sunday-school worker to secure as its editor. At once I questioned in my mind whether that were not a place that I should be fitted for, and in which I might hope to do my better life service. As I had known

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Mr. Wanamaker for years, it occurred to me that, if he knew that I would be willing to leave Hartford, he might invite me to come to Philadelphia and edit his paper. But for me to suggest such a thought to him would be like telling the Lord where I would like to be before he had indicated his purpose, and that would be contrary to my life principles of service; therefore I left for Canada in the line of my legitimate service, having prayerfully committed all my interests to the Lord trustfully.

Returning to Hartford after an absence of two weeks, I found awaiting me a letter from Mr. Wanamaker asking if I would consider a proposition to remove to Philadelphia and become editor of The Sunday School Times. Mr. Wanamaker said that, if I would do this, he would like to have me visit Philadelphia at his expense for a conference on the subject. I accepted this letter, not as an indication that I was to be in this new field of labor, but that I was to consider the proposal carefully. Accord-

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ingly I so wrote to Mr. Wanamaker, and afterwards visited him.

Before I could listen to any formal proposition to assume a new charge, I must be sure that I could discharge all obligations already assumed or under consideration between myself and other parties. As Mr. Wanamaker was soon to leave for Europe for an absence of several months, he wanted me to undertake the editorial work at once. That, I told him, was impossible, as we were arranging for an International Sunday-school Convention, and I was chairman of the Executive Committee, and could not abandon that work while it was incomplete.

He was then ready to waive the question of time. Several other questions were subsequently, one by one, disposed of. This required repeated visits to Philadelphia. Everything thus far seemed to indicate God's purpose of leading me into the new field; but until I was sure that there was no existing duty as a barrier to my enter-

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ing the field, I declined even to consider the question of pecuniary or other compensation involved, lest I should be unduly influenced in my mind by the thought of this. And now comes the story of the most striking interposition of Providence as furthering the settlement of the preliminaries in the case.

As I was one morning leaving Philadelphia for New York, in the course of these prayerful conferences, Mr. Wanamaker asked me:

"What now stands in the way of your decision?"

"I must see two other persons,—one of them in New York, the other in Boston."

"Why not go at once and see them?"

"Because I have an important committee meeting in Hartford the day after to-morrow," I replied; "and I must be at that meeting."

"Well," said Mr. Wanamaker, "then we must wait, and hope for things to work out."

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On my way to Hartford, as I entered a car at the Grand Central Station in New York, to my surprise I saw the New York man whom I said I could not stop to meet. He represented a prominent national religious society that wished me to superintend a department of its evangelistic work. I had promised to consider this carefully, and I wanted to learn from him the details that would enable me to know what was my duty. He was in the next seat to mine on the way to New Haven. Sitting down by him, I entered into conversation, and obtained the desired information without telling him of my purpose, and was convinced that my duty was not in that direction. Before we reached New Haven the first barrier of which I spoke to Mr. Wanamaker was removed.

When I rose the next morning, I prayed earnestly over my important duties of the day in Hartford, and asked that the Lord would give me further light as to The Sunday School Times matter. My next

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desire as to this was to see my Boston friend, Mr. Thomas C. Evans. Yet there were two points in connection with my committee meeting, and another interest for the day, that burdened my mind as I prayed. It seemed as though the Lord counseled me, "Go down town, and do the best you can there, and leave the rest to me."

All went well at the committee meeting. The points of difference which I had feared would cause trouble were settled satisfactorily to all, and soon after noon I returned to my house grateful for the day's results so far.

As I entered the door of my house, to my great surprise I saw through the open parlor door my friend Evans of Boston sitting inside. He had never before entered my house, nor had he now any reason to suspect my special desire for an interview with him. In my amazement I called out to him, as I entered the room :

"Tom Evans, what brought you here

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to-day?—or, rather, what do you think brought you? I *know*, but I would like to know what you *think*."

"Well, that's the queer thing about it, Clay," he responded. "Last night I was at my brother's home in Shelburne Falls, above Greenfield, Massachusetts. This morning I started for my home by the way of Springfield. Just as I was starting [that was about the time I was praying over the case] a strong impression was borne in upon my mind, 'Go down to Hartford and see Clay Trumbull.' I said to myself, 'I've nothing to see him for, and it will take me out of my way and delay my return home.' Again the impression came, 'Go down to Hartford and see Clay Trumbull.' So I came, and here I am."

"That is right," I said; "and now I'll tell you what you came for."

Evans was a friend and old army comrade. He knew much about newspapers and their business side, and I wanted to have his counsel on several points before I

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could decide on such a change in my life occupation as I was now considering. Therefore it was that I was so anxious to see him. With that afternoon's talk with Evans the last preliminary obstacle to my considering Mr. Wanamaker's proposition was removed, and I wrote him accordingly.

Soon an arrangement was made by which I became sole editor and part owner of The Sunday School Times, and my son-in-law, John D. Wattles, became the business manager and a part owner of the paper. Two years later we two purchased Mr. Wanamaker's interest in the business, and we had entire control. And this was the way in which I was led of God, step by step, to the editor's chair, for my work in the last third of a busy life.

When, in July, 1875, I, with my family, left Hartford for Philadelphia, I said confidently to my wife :

"Alice, if future events should seem to show that I have wrecked my business prospects, and even my reputation, by going

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to Philadelphia, I want you to know that I was sure, when I left Hartford, that God wanted me to go there. Whether I personally am to gain or lose by the move, *God* knows. That God clearly indicated his wish for me to make the move, *I* know. The result I am glad to leave with God."

That's a good way to feel about any and every move in God's service. In fact, it is the only right way for a child of God to feel.

## VIII

### God's Protection of One's Good Name

My friend, Hon. E. A. Rollins, who was Commissioner of Internal Revenue in "Reconstruction Days," after the Civil War, told me of an incident in his experience that emphasized the truth which I now confirm by a recital of an experience of mine. It was during the bitter struggle for supremacy between President Johnson and Congress, while the attempted impeachment of the former by the latter was in progress with all its excitements.

One evening Mr. Rollins and Hon. Roscoe Conkling had occasion to be in conference with a friend near the outskirts of Washington. It was after midnight when they started to return to their homes. On their way they met unexpectedly a man who was commonly suspected of being an

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agent of the more zealous and determined friends of the President in the effort to prevent his impeachment. It was even said that he was offering bribes of money or of official favor in order to win votes from the opposition. As the two friends, who were acquaintances of this man, met him, they said a word of ordinary salutation, and passed on. After going a few yards, Mr. Rollins said :

“Conkling, suppose we were seen as we were speaking to that man just now. If it were told in Washington to-morrow that we two were seen out here in conference with that man after midnight, what unjust suspicion it might throw on us.

“We couldn’t deny the fact that we were out here speaking with him after midnight, and we shouldn’t have the opportunity of explaining to all how it happened, or, if we did, we might not be believed. I tell you, Conkling, we are always in danger of being misunderstood or misrepresented, even when we are doing the best we can.”

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To Mr. Rollins's surprise, Mr. Conkling responded:

"Well, Rollins, we ought to believe that God will take care of our good name while we are honestly doing our duty in his service."

Mr. Rollins suggested, as he told me this incident, that this truth impressed him more as uttered by Mr. Conkling than if a clergyman had said it. Yet it is a truth to be held precious, whoever utters it. If God can be trusted to guard our homes and health and life, we can surely trust him to guard the greater treasure of our good name and reputation, where his supernatural control of the natural is even more needed here than in those other spheres. My conviction on this subject has strengthened with the passing years, and I have had added reason to be grateful that this truth is a truth.

On one occasion, not long after the Civil War, I was sent for in my Hartford home to come to the relief of a Christian mother

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in another New England city, who desired my counsel and assistance. Her wayward son, in whose welfare I had been interested for years, had run away from home, and she had heard of him as in trouble in a certain district of Brooklyn, New York. Her husband was ill, and was in such a condition that she could not even tell him of her trouble, hence she was all the more anxious and distressed. When I learned the facts I determined to attempt her relief.

Telling my wife, who alone knew of my plans, I started for Brooklyn to find the young man. As the visit involved some personal peril, and my wife was anxious for me, I took, to encourage her, a pistol that I had carried in my army service. In this I made a mistake that I have never since repeated. God can protect his child without a revolver.

While attempting to board a crowded car at a street corner near the outskirts of Brooklyn, my buttoned overcoat lapel caught on the hand-rail and was torn open

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as I stepped up. My pistol fell out; it struck on the hammer as it fell, and a flash and explosion followed. Cries and confusion resulted, and all was excitement. As I stepped back on the ground I picked up my pistol unobserved and replaced it in my pocket, and I found myself in the rapidly increasing crowd, quite unsuspected of a part in the cause of this excitement.

As I stood on the sidewalk looking at the crowd, I saw that I could easily walk off unhindered; yet that would be unmanly. Seeing a policeman near, I stepped up to him, and said :

"I am the cause of all this scene. A pistol accidentally fell from my pocket and was discharged. It may have wounded some one. I want to put myself in your care."

It proved that the car conductor had received a slight flesh wound in the calf of his leg. I went with my protector to the police station office, and there the whole case was considered. The policeman to

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whom I first spoke reported that I had come to him voluntarily when I was unsuspected, and it was manifestly an accident. I saw the conductor, and told him I would gladly meet all expense to which he might be subjected. Then I was permitted to leave unmolested, on the giving of my personal address. I inquired particularly if it was essential that my name be made public. Being told that the police office had no power to refuse to give it to the press if requested, I had to accept the state of things as it was, and I returned to my home.

My position was now most unfortunate. I was prevented, by the nature of my special mission at that time, from explaining to the public why I was in that particular region at that time, with a loaded pistol. A newspaper report of the occurrence would be likely to throw suspicion on me, without my having the power even to attempt the clearing of myself. I faced an unpleasant dilemma. When I reached my

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home in the evening, I prostrated myself before the Lord, and stated the case as it was.

I told him that, while I saw my error in having the pistol with me, I was seeking to do his work, and this trouble had come upon me in this effort. I realized that, if my good name was smirched in the opinion of the public, I ought to retire from his public service, for God's servants should have a good report among those who are without. Hence I would leave it to him to say, by the issue of this affair, whether I was to continue in my special work for him, or to retire from it; and there I rested it.

It was with no ordinary interest that I looked into the New York papers as they came to Hartford the next forenoon. In at least three of the principal metropolitan dailies the report of the affair in Brooklyn was given in full; but in each case a different name was given as mine, and in no instance had it any resemblance to the real one.

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As I read these reports I dropped on my knees before God, and thanked him that he had thus indicated his wish that I should still continue in his work under his guard and guidance.

How good it is for a child of God to feel that in every peril in his sphere of God's service he "shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty"!

## IX

### Given a Treasure in Friend and Helper

God's best gifts to us are ordinarily not in our finding some missing material treasure, or in enabling us to discharge some particular duty, but in his bringing to our side some friend or helper who is more to our mental and spiritual life than we dared to think of, or to desire, before the gift came from God. In this line I have had very much to be grateful for; and it is of such a gift, as peculiarly pointed out of God, that I now wish to bear my hearty testimony.

In the spring of 1870 I was living at Hartford, with a business office in Boston, in charge of the general missionary operations of The American Sunday-school Union for the New England field. For several years I had had a valued assistant in that work,

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in Hartford, aiding me in my official correspondence and in the details of Sunday-school movements in Connecticut. Suddenly that assistant was called to another sphere of labor, with opportunities peculiarly suited to his talents and tastes, and he said he would leave it with me to say whether he should accept the proffer, to my serious inconvenience, or should continue as my helper. I saw that it was my duty to advise him, for his own sake, to accept the position, even though I did not see how I could replace him in the position he was occupying. And it was thus that I found myself needing an assistant in a sphere of the Lord's service, without knowing which way to turn for him. I laid the matter before the Lord, and was on the watch for his indications of help to me.

On the third Sunday in May, I was a visitor in the Sunday-school of the Second Congregational Church of Norwich, Connecticut. I had, in advance, no reason to suppose that I might there have any indi-

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cation as to the supply of my special need, nor was this need peculiarly in my mind at the time. During the opening exercises I was seated between the superintendent and the singing-leader. Just as I was bending my head in prayer, my eyes caught a glimpse of a young man passing through the door of the library-room at my right hand. I did not see the full face even for the moment, but as it passed from sight the message was borne in upon my mind from above, "*That* is the young man who is to be your helper."

When the prayer was concluded, I turned my eyes to the library-room, and I saw the young man there. Pointing him out to the singing-leader by my side, I asked, "Who is he?" The answer came, "That's Johnnie Wattles." I said, "I'll ask you about him by and by;" and then I gave myself again to the exercises of the hour.

Later I was told that "Johnnie Wattles" was assistant in a well-known apothecary's store in the city, where, with a younger

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brother, he was learning the business, in order that the two might start out for themselves in that business. It seemed most unlikely that he would be willing to turn aside from his life work to assist me in what was little more than a temporary clerical position; but I felt justified in following up the matter in the line of the mental suggestion that I had received as from the Lord. I sought an interview with him, and, without telling him of this mental suggestion, I spoke of the position which I desired to have filled, and asked him if he would think of taking it. I spoke of the incidental advantages of the place in the kind of work with which it was associated and the sort of people with whom it would bring him into pleasant relations. He expressed surprise at my interest in him as a stranger, and promised to look carefully into the question, and let me know his conclusions.

I did not, of course, propose to ignore reason and prudence in such a matter, be-

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cause of the providential prompting which had started me in this line. I consulted the pastor of the young man as to his character and capacity. He spoke of him with warmth as of a lovely spirit, of fine natural capabilities, and of firm Christian principles. Others whom I consulted agreed with his pastor as to his winning ways and his sterling worth, and I had no doubt on these points.

He also looked into the matter cautiously, and consulted various advisers. Most of these thought he would be unwise to make the proposed change, but his pastor and a few others approved his inclination to accept the proffered position. In talking it over with me, he said that he had felt that the business of a druggist was his life work, and he should not wish to turn permanently aside from that pathway without clearer indications than he had yet received of the Lord's wish for him to change. I told him that he would be entirely free to try it for only a year as an experiment.

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I was all the while careful not to attempt to influence him in the slightest degree in favor of accepting my proposition by any suggestion that in my opinion it would be wise for him to do so. I wanted him left free to act as he thought God would have him. I wanted him to come only if God wanted him to. And I knew that if God wanted him to come he would come.

Four weeks after the subject was first broached to him, he wrote me as follows: "I believe I have looked carefully at both sides of the question which you have so kindly left entirely with me, and am thoroughly prepared to-night to decide. I most gladly and heartily offer myself to you, hoping, as I do so, that it may prove for our mutual good. Ever since I had the first interview with you, I have been delighted with the idea of making the change, and have not now the least doubt in my mind but that it is the very best thing I can do. It seems almost a miracle to me that you should have noticed me as

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you did, and much more that you should have once thought of asking me to take the place; and I can only hope and pray that I may be such an assistant to you as you have anticipated. I am afraid that I shall not come up to your expectations, but shall try, and do the best I can."

At the time he first came to me, Mr. Wattles was a little more than twenty years old, but his fair face and youthful appearance made him seem hardly more than eighteen. Yet he was of most engaging manners, and he commanded confidence without limitation. He won every heart at the start by his looks and ways, and he held every heart to the last by his sterling worth. Outside of his office work, his first experience in the Sunday-school field was as superintendent of a mission school in Hartford, where the roughest boys and the most cultivated teachers were alike under the spell of his winsome presence. Then he was for a while the leader of the teachers'-meeting of the Asylum Hill Con-

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gregational Church, in its weekly study of the Sunday-school lesson. Among those teachers were men and women of rich experience and disciplined minds, including a distinguished judge of the Supreme Court of the state; and all were alike charmed and helped by his leadership. While not having the advantages of a liberal education, Mr. Wattles had clearness of mind in the perception of truth, and sound good sense in the use of all his powers. Moreover, he worked diligently in preparation for any service he was called to attempt, and he never assumed to know what he did not know positively.

Before six months had passed, Mr. Wattles said that he would never go back to his former position, even at ten thousand dollars a year. He felt that God was leading him to better service. He soon had his younger brother in another branch of the work which now had his heart, and he himself was pressing onward and upward. He became the general secretary of the

## **Given a Treasure in Friend and Helper**

Connecticut Sunday-school Association, and he developed special power in organizing and directing movements for the improvement of the Sunday-schools of the state. He showed himself also an effective speaker in conventions and institutes throughout New England. Moreover, he was showing power and gaining influence and winning friends more and more widely all the time.

And in this way my life came to be linked with the God-led life of John D. Wattles, who was later my loved friend, my dear son-in-law, my business partner, and a helper, an example, and an inspiration to me, while proving himself a helper and an inspiration to many thousands of those who never saw his face or heard his voice, and an example to every one who ever knew him as he was. And when, at his life's close, after my twenty-three years of loving companionship with him, I came to look back over the way he was led of God so willingly, so trustfully, so loyally,

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even to the hour when he was led beyond our human sight, I rejoiced that I was permitted to be so near him in his constant walk with God, and to have seen so clearly the loveliness of such a God-led life.

## X

### Teaching Lessons of Trust to my Helper

Because John Wattles, my God-given friend and helper, was younger than myself in years and Christian experience, I felt it to be my duty and privilege to give him the benefit of any lesson I had learned in God's service, and he was ever ready to heed and to profit by such suggestions. These lessons were in various lines, as from time to time I thought he had special need.

One afternoon, as he came into my Hartford home after several hours' absence in the city, he mentioned to me that he had, since he went out, lost a gold sleeve-button which he greatly prized as a souvenir. I asked him what effort he had made to recover it. He answered, "None," for he had been in so many places, since he left

## **Illustrative Answers to Prayer**

home, that he had no reason for looking in any one place more than another.

A lesson that I then desired to teach him was the importance of persistent thoroughness in whatever he had to do, so I said to him :

" Well, I think you had better not say that you can't find it in any place till at least you have looked in all places where you may have left it. Why not carefully retrace your steps to the ten places or the twenty that you have been in since you last saw it, and see what comes of that? "

Promptly he started out to do as I suggested, while I remained at my study table.

As I sat writing, the thought came to me that I had started my young friend on this mission in his own strength, without suggesting to him that it was only by God's guidance that he could hope to be successful, and for that guidance he should pray at the start. For this omission I reproached myself, and was heartily ashamed.

## Teaching Lessons of Trust to my Helper

Dropping on my knees by my study chair,  
I prayed to God:

"Father, forgive me! Here have I started out this loved child of thine on a search where he needs thy special help, without suggesting that he should seek that help trustfully. Moreover, I have not myself prayed for thy help to him. Grant now that he suffers no loss through my failure toward thee."

As I rose from my knees, John Wattles entered the outside door, saying, "I've found the sleeve-button." At this the thought came to me, "Your prayer then had nothing to do with this; for he must have found the button before you prayed." "Tell me where you found it," I said.

"Well, that's strangest of all," he responded. "I had retraced my steps so far as I could recall them, looking about me all the way, but I reached the house again without finding anything. Just as my hand was on the door-knob to enter here, I was prompted to stop and look back, and there

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

on the very door-step, where it must have been all the while, was the missing sleeve-button."

There was not much room to doubt God's part in all this. I told Wattles of my conscious failure and my penitent prayer, and then we kneeled together before God, and gave him thanks for our newly learned lesson, and we tried thence-forward to profit by it.

After some three years in the work to which I had originally invited him, Mr. Wattles came to feel that at the best there was no immediate prospect there of promotion into any such service as would seem to be worthy of the best endeavors of his life, and he began to look about him for a more promising sphere. The life-insurance field was at that time offering special inducements to energetic canvassers, and he had reason to think he might be peculiarly successful in it. He came to me seeking counsel in the matter. I asked him whether he thought that God had

## **Teaching Lessons of Trust to my Helper**

called him to the place he was now in. He said he did. I asked him whether this place still demanded all the powers he now had. He said it did. I asked him whether God had given him any special indication that he ought to go elsewhere. He said he had not. I asked him whether, in case God really wanted him to stay where he was all his life, with no other gain than the gain of serving God there, he would be willing to yield all his personal ambitions and desires for other service, and to live and die just there.

He thought over this question for a few minutes, and then he said heartily that he was ready to be led of God as to his life work, and that he would trust God to show him just where he could best serve and honor God. Here was another turning-point in his life path, or, rather, another point at which he refused to turn from that path. Within a year of that time the great financial crash of 1873 came, with its shattering, for the time, of the best possibilities

## **Illustrative Answers to Prayer**

of the field that had seemed so tempting to him; and within a little more than two years there came to him an opening to remove to Philadelphia with me, and become a part owner, and the business manager, of *The Sunday School Times*, where he continued to life's close. Thus again he saw that God was ready to lead one who wanted to be led of God.

## XI

### Taught Lessons of Faith by my Helper

Although from my greater experience, when I first came to know John Wattles, it was my privilege to teach some lessons in trustful service to that new friend and helper, he soon passed on before me in the path of such service. It was not long before I realized gratefully, as did all who knew us, that he was in advance of me in restful faith, as he was in love and zeal and practical efficiency, and, in consequence, I came to lean on and to look up to my young and admirable strong-souled friend and partner.

When he and I assumed entire and joint control of *The Sunday School Times* its circulation was less than twenty-five thousand. Largely through his ability and energy that circulation rose to more than

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

one hundred and fifty thousand, at which point it continued up to the time of his death. In all my editorial work, I was helped by his wise counsel and aided by his hearty co-operation. I could have done little without him; and he deserved the credit for much of the best that was secured in every department of the paper, in all the years after he joined me in its management.

Clearness of head, quickness of perception, grasp of principles of action, unswerving integrity, firmness of purpose, coupled with remarkable winsomeness of manner, were marked characteristics in the business dealings of Mr. Wattles. All who were brought in contact with him felt that he was a man whom they could trust utterly, while he was not to be easily imposed upon, nor turned from his convictions or judgments.

A good illustration of his uniform method of dealing with others in important business transactions was given, in a letter

## Taught Lessons of Faith by my Helper

written, during the last few months of his life, to one who was acting as his representative in the negotiation of a large contract, which he would be very glad to secure. Speaking of the interviews of his representative with the other party to the contract, he said: "Don't *show* any anxiety over the matter. Don't *have* any anxiety. Be awfully courteous and accommodating, but quietly determined; and smile sweetly if the whole thing falls through."

But in all and above all it was the beautiful rest of his faith that was the source of his power, and that was felt to be so by all who were with him or who came under his personal influence. That was indeed a cause of gratification and an incitement to me.

Although having the appearance of health, Mr. Wattles was in his later years courageously resisting for a long time a tendency to acute diseases of the lungs. For eight years he was compelled to pass a portion of every winter in Florida; and

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soon after his return from the South, in April, 1891, he was brought very low with a complication of lung troubles. Before his physician had observed any fresh cause of illness, Mr. Wattles was impressed with the thought that God was about to lead him into a deeper flood than he had yet passed; and, in his quiet faith, his only anxiety in view of it was for his dear ones, not for himself. As he sat alone in his room, on the evening before his outburst of disease, he penciled these lines on a newspaper wrapper, in expression of his feelings of the hour.

### THROUGH THE WATERS

Indeed I know  
That thou wilt be with me;  
For here below  
Thy touch has won my confidence.  
But may I know  
That thou wilt be with them  
Whom I love so?  
Then with joy could I go hence.  
Whether the waters should be deep and wide,  
Or what may be upon the other side,

## **Caught Lessons of Faith by my Helper**

It matters not;  
For I indeed do know  
That thou wilt be with me,  
Since here below  
Thy touch has won my confidence.  
But may I know  
That thou wilt be with them  
Whom I love so?  
Then with joy can I go hence.

The attack of disease was a violent one, and its precise nature somewhat obscure, and he sank under it steadily, despite the skill of the ablest physicians, and the current of loving prayers that went up for him continually. Finally the physicians themselves felt that the end was very near, and they permitted me to speak freely with him of matters that called for consideration, in view of his approaching death, as I had told them I must before he should be finally unable to respond to me. So, one Sunday afternoon, I kneeled by his bedside, and spoke lovingly of our long-time relations and of the possibilities of the future, asking him how I might act for him and

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

his, and for our common interests, in his absence.

I had for years so leaned upon him in the business management of our affairs, that I felt quite incompetent to take up the entire burden of them at that time; and I feared I should utterly break down, if I were left alone. In my weakness I burst out with the agonizing cry, "Dear John, I don't see how I can live on and do my work without you!"

That cry of mine was an appeal to his unselfish soul that he could not resist. As he told me afterwards, he then saw with surprise and anxiety what my condition was, and that I really felt I could not at that time do what needed to be done without him. And although, as he said, he had not before prayed for his recovery, he at once asked God to allow him to get up and help me. "And as soon as I asked this of God," he said, "I was assured that it would be so. I knew I should get up." In his trustfulness he had not prayed for pro-

## **Taught Lessons of Faith by my Helper**

longed life on his own account; but if he was really needed here for the sake of others he would ask prolonged life for their sake, and if he asked it he knew it would be given.

As showing how God works through human means for the accomplishing of his divine purposes, that very afternoon, when things looked so dark for John Wattles's recovery, his two physicians were prompted to attempt an experimental operation that offered small prospect of success, and that might, indeed, hasten the end. That operation was successful beyond their most sanguine anticipations. And so my friend and helper was raised from that bed of death; and he set himself without delay to the arranging of our business affairs, and to the training of his successor, so as to enable me to bear the responsibility that would be on me when he should finally be taken away. He was sure that God was leading him in all his life work, and that God would sustain him until it was completed.

## **Illustrative Answers to Prayer**

It would seem, indeed, as if God had been ready to release him earlier from all struggle and suffering, and that he himself was ready to go. But my call to him for help made him ask God that he might get up again, and live on awhile, at whatever cost to himself, in order to render me assistance in God's service.

And for two years after that he suffered and toiled lovingly and uncomplainingly, doing for others, and teaching us all lessons of love and trust. In his last letter to me from his Florida home, where he entered into his rest, he wrote of his Saviour's sustaining presence, "I think that nothing but constant suffering could have brought me to realize as I do that I may have some of his own strength every day, as well as be a sharer of his life forever. It is indeed a wonderful thing, but it is true, that we can live in him."

Neither death nor life was able to separate him from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

## XII

### God's Tenderness with a Doubting Truster

It does not follow that one who has had most reason to trust God trusts him most confidently. This has been true from the beginning, and man's hesitancy in trusting God's promised love and loving care is still manifest on every side among the children of men.

Abraham, father of the faithful, when pleading for Sodom, seemed to tire of interceding with God before God tired of granting his requests. Gideon, "mighty man of valor" that he was, when specially called of God to the deliverance of his people from the Midianites, and assured that he should have success, asked sign after sign from God in testimony that God meant what he said. He asked, as he left overnight a fleece of wool on the threshing-

## **Illustrative Answers to Prayer**

floor, that God would send dew on the fleece, while there should be no dew on the ground about it. When this was done, Gideon was not quite satisfied. He asked that God would try it the other way, and send dew on the ground around the fleece, while the fleece was kept dry. This was like God in his loving tenderness with one who had doubt even while he trusted. And Gideon evidently had a good deal of human nature in him, in his hesitancy in his faith, even while he was a man of uncommon faith and of uncommon valor. It is easier to doubt when one has no reason to doubt, than to have faith where one has every reason to have faith.

A young Christian worker, whose experiences of God's loving tenderness I had occasion to know not a little about, was a striking illustration of this truth in God's dealings with his children, even with those for whom he seems to be doing most, year by year. He began his Christian life while a poor boy near the border line between

## **God's Tenderness with a Doubting Truster**

Massachusetts and New Hampshire. When brought to consecrate his life to Christ's service, he gave himself unreservedly to that service. He had neither education nor the means to secure it, nor had he friends to help him along in his studies; but with all that he was, and with all his lack, he put himself at God's disposal, to be used as God should direct.

He had the idea that serving God wholly meant being in the work of the Christian ministry, at home or abroad. Yet how he could prepare himself for the ministry he had no idea. In his uncertainty, therefore, he went on his knees before God, and asked for guidance. He told God that he would start out at once on a course of preparation for the ministry. If this was right, God would continue to help him. If he had erred in judgment in counting this his proper course, God would cease to open the way for a farther advance, and he would, when thus stopped, know that he must seek some other line of service.

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

When I first met him he was near the close of his course in the theological seminary. He told me how God had led him along step by step, giving him repeated evidences of his approval when he had special need of help. Yet, he said, he had found himself doubting, or questioning, at each temporary obstacle or hindrance, as if God had not yet fully proved himself as his guide and helper.

For instance, after he had worked his way along through his preparatory studies, he came to a point where he could not pass beyond the Greek Reader without a Greek lexicon; and yet he had no money for the purchase of such a work. He seemed at a standstill. It looked as if God's hindrance had come. He laid the matter before the Lord, and then waited. For a day or two he studied out his lessons by the aid of the glossary at the back of the Reader, but he knew that he could not go on in that way much longer.

One day he was sent for to the hotel to

## God's Tenderness with a Doubting Truster

see a stranger who had inquired for him. Going there, he was told that the stranger was closing up the estate of a clergyman who had died in another town. Some of that clergyman's books were to be given by his executor where they could do good to others. The stranger having heard of this student as working his way along to the ministry, had brought these books for him to choose from. As the student was shown the books on the stranger's table, he saw there the Greek lexicon of which he was in need. He took it, and thanked the stranger. Then he thanked God, and took courage.

He confessed, as he told me his experiences, that he was frequently troubled with doubts as to whether he was really being led of God; yet God was evidently dealing tenderly with the doubting truster. On one occasion, after he reached the theological seminary in his course, he was so distressed on this point that he prayed earnestly about it one forenoon. He even

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asked the Lord to give him a more positive sign than before in order to encourage his faith. He had need just now of five dollars, to enable him to take his next step in this path of duty, and he knew not where to turn for it. If, indeed, he were to receive five dollars in a letter by mail just at this time, he would know that the Lord had sent it to encourage his faith. He had never had a gift of money sent him in this way. So, Gideon-like, he asked this new sign from the Lord.

After this season of prayer he lay down on the outside of his bed and slept a tired sleep. He awaked refreshed at noon, and went to his dinner without a thought of his doubt or his prayer. After dinner he went with some of his fellow-students to the city post-office at the hour of the principal mail distribution. To his surprise, a letter addressed to him was handed out with the seminary mail. On opening it, he found it was from an uncle of his in New York State, who had never before given him any

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assistance, but who now enclosed five dollars, having heard that he was working his way to the ministry, and might be glad of a little help. It would seem as if such a child of God ought to be ready to trust such a Father in heaven. He might have been, if he had not had so much human nature in him, Gideon-like.

It was quite a number of years, from the time when he determined to enter upon a course of study with a view to the Christian ministry, before he completed that course in his graduation from the theological seminary. He had only a few dollars when he began his studies in the village academy. He had toiled hard to secure his support in working his way up by slow degrees. During his last year in the seminary he had occasionally supplied a pulpit in the country, and received compensation for that service. On receiving his pay for such a ministry on the Sunday before his graduation, as he told me soon afterwards, he found that he had a few dollars more than

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he started out with on his consecrated course. As he then looked back to that beginning, he realized how good God had been to him in all these years, and he wondered that he could have ever doubted God.

I had the privilege of helping that child of God into his needy home-missionary field in California, and to hear from him after he was there; and I was privileged to be used of God in answering, as it were, another of his prayers in an hour of his need in his mission field. My friend, Hon. Henry P. Haven of New London, in writing to me one day, asked, in a way that was his frequent method, at the close of his letter on some business matter:

"Do you know of any one of God's children to whom I ought to send twenty dollars? If you do, I'll send that sum to you." I replied that I knew such a man, and I told him of this home missionary, who, as I was well aware, had difficulty in getting along in his new field.

## **God's Tenderness with a Doubting Trustee**

Learning that the young man was in California, Mr. Haven sent a check, payable in gold, as that was the standard there, while specie payments were suspended throughout the country. In acknowledging the gift, my home-missionary friend told me that I could not know how timely its receipt was. He had found his scattered parish, or local field, more than twenty miles long, and he had to do all his visiting on foot. One day, one of his parishioners told the new pastor that he must get a horse, and that a man who was interested in the work, and with whom he had been talking on the subject, would let him have a little pony suitable for his purpose for twenty dollars in gold, which was much less than its worth.

My friend said that his parishioner little thought that, with his starvation pittance of support, twenty dollars was as hopelessly beyond his means as two hundred; so he merely thanked him, and told him that he would think it over. And, just

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after this conversation, my letter with Mr. Haven's gold check came in, and the missionary pony was secured.

With the frequent repetition of such evidences of God's guidance given to us, or to those whom we know or know of, it is indeed strange that we are not readier in our need to pray and to trust, nothing doubting. Yet God does not get discouraged with us, nor lack in his loving tenderness. This is because He is what he is, and because he knows that we are what we are.

## XIII

### Trusting God rather than a Child of God

It is hard for us to learn that our faith must rest on God, rather than on God's promises, or on God's word, or on our prayers to God in our need, or on our best work in his service according to his commandment and the indications of his providences. It is because God is God that we should trust him utterly, and have confidence in his promises, and prize his word, and pray as he invites, and work as he directs. Back of all that represents God is God himself, and he is to be trusted above all. An occasion when I had reason to emphasize the duty of trusting God rather than a child of God brought out this truth more clearly to my own mind.

A troubled Christian mother sent for me in an hour of dire distress. Her only son

## **Illustrative Answers to Prayer**

had been for a while wayward and dissipated. She had prayed for him earnestly and constantly. After a while he had been brought into the church, and had become an active Christian worker. This gave her joy unspeakable. But now he had fallen back again. He had seemingly lost his faith. He had left his home, and enlisted in the navy, and had sailed to the far East. His mother was broken-hearted and well-nigh in despair.

I asked her if she had less reason to have faith in God, as she now prayed for her boy, than before. She said that, of course, she couldn't have as much ground of faith while her son was a reprobate as when he was active in Christian work.

"Is the difference in God or in your boy?" I asked.

"The difference is in my boy," she said, "and that is what's troubling me."

"On whom did your faith rest when your boy was doing best?"

"On God, of course."

## Trusting God rather than a Child of God

"And has God changed?"

"Of course not."

"Then why is your faith lessened?"

"Because of my poor boy's failure."

"Then you are looking at your boy as if he were the ground of your faith, instead of at God."

"Do you mean to suggest," said the anxious mother, "that even now, while my poor boy is in his present state, I can look up to God, and pray for my boy as trustfully as I prayed while he was active in Christian work? Do you mean to suggest that?"

"If your faith rests on God, you can pray to him just as confidently now as ever for whatever he can do for you or your boy. But you must look at God, and not at your boy, while you pray," I said.

"Then I'll do that," said the anxious mother; and she turned again to God in need and in trust.

Two months or so after that, that mother sent for me again. She had received a

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letter from her son that gladdened her heart. It was from the vessel he was on in the Chinese seas. It was a letter full of penitence and of good purposes, and of hope and trust; and it told a touching story.

About the time when the mother turned anew to God in her New England home with a prayer of fresh faith for her wandering boy,—before, of course, he could have had any word from her about it,—as he was on the deck, one sunny afternoon, in those far-off Chinese waters, a call seemed to come to him from God summoning him to turn from his evil courses to his better self, and to God and to his old faith in God; and a sense of his sin and his need came over him. Overpowered by his feelings, he went down into the forecastle and prostrated himself before God, confessing his sins, and asking for pardon and help to do differently. And now he wrote to his mother as a penitent child, asking her to pray for him, and telling her of his sorrow

## **T**rusting God rather than a Child of God

and his new purpose of living a new life by God's help.

That glad-hearted mother was ready now to perceive and to say that it is ever better to trust in God than to trust in any child of God, even her own child. That's a lesson for all of us to learn and to value.

A clergyman in Eastern Massachusetts, whom I knew well about that time, told me of a good Scotch mother in his parish who had learned this precious lesson, and who found comfort in it. She had given her boy to God at his birth, and she felt that she and hers were in the everlasting covenant with God. Faithfully she trained her boy, but he went astray. While sad-hearted over this, she did not despair; for her faith rested on God, not on her boy.

Going to God with her loving, trustful heart, she said in confident assurance,—an assurance that God honors in a child of his,—“Lord, I am thine, and Johnnie's mine, and we are thine. Lord, thy Johnnie's going astray. Bring him back, Lord;

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bring him back. Lord, if Johnnie's lost, in the Great Day his blood will I require at thine hand."

Such holy boldness, in a child of God, will never fail of its purpose. When a troubled father came to Jesus with his demon-possessed child, and asked for his help, Jesus said, "If thou canst [believe]! All things are possible to him that believeth [for his as well as for himself]" (Mark 9:17-25). Then that father cried out, "I believe [for my child and for myself]; help thou mine unbelief." And the needed help was given. That is God's way with his children.

## XIV

### Similar Experiences by Personal Friends

When a child of God has any personal experience of joy or of sorrow, of trial or of encouragement, that seems peculiar and exceptional, he is likely to find that others—more, perhaps, than he has imagined—have had similar, if not the same, experiences, and that he is by no means solitary in his opportunity of learning the lessons which God would thus teach him. Whatever encouragement God gives to any child of his to call upon him in his need, according to God's invitation and promise, every other child of God in like need can have from God if he will rightly claim it.

This, indeed, is the chief reason for my recording these illustrative answers to prayer that have come within my range of personal experience, or the experience of

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

those personally known to me. I have by no means recorded all of the remarkable answers to prayer that have been accorded to me in the years of my Christian life,—nor yet, indeed, even the most remarkable of them,—but I have selected a few of those most likely to be of help to God's children who read this record.

I have often given to younger disciples illustrations of my way of praying to God for special help, and of God's way of giving help to me in answer to the prayer of need and of trust. This I have done to encourage or strengthen their faith; and at times they have come back to tell me, joyfully, of God's dealings with them, in response to their prayers, as tenderly and lovingly as I had urged them to expect.

An illustration of this was in the case of an earnest young Christian disciple whom I had been privileged to lead to the Master when we were first together in a health resort in East Florida, soon after the Civil War. The special duties and privileges of

## **Similar Experiences by Personal Friends**

the child of God were quite new to him when he entered that service, and he was glad to hear every word of suggestion or counsel that I gave him in that line. This matter of special answer to particular prayers in things of our ordinary life seemed to him at first almost too wonderful and too good to be true. Yet he listened to and pondered all that I said on that subject, and wished that he could verify it in his own experience.

One summer, he was in the White Mountains. In his wandering among the hills, one day, he lost a valuable diamond stud. Missing it when he returned to the hotel, he regretted its loss, but its finding seemed out of the question. At this juncture, my teachings on the subject of special prayer came to him with fresh force. He realized that he could not by himself hope to find the missing stud among the loose stones on the rough mountain side, where he had been wandering that afternoon, as he might have hoped to had he lost it on

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

an ordinary highway. Yet God could direct him to it wherever it was, if that, indeed, were God's way.

Kneeling before God, he stated the case as a young disciple. He told God that he realized that, of himself, he was helpless in such a search, but that he was going to attempt it, and he asked God's guidance in it. If, indeed, he found the stud, he would accept this as indicating that God approved his faith in such a matter. It was not merely the diamond stud that he sought to recover, it was encouragement to his faith through God's help. In that spirit he clambered again the mountain side.

His eye of sense, quickened by the light of faith, was alert and watchful as he went again over the rough path in the direction of his former wanderings. Soon the glistening of the diamond among the stones of the mountain path attracted his attention, and he came back to his hotel to thank God for his guidance, and with renewed and increased faith as more precious than

## **Similar Experiences by Personal Friends**

a thousand diamonds. As I watched him in the subsequent years, I could bear witness to this, as he encouraged others to a like faith in God.

Another illustration of willingness to trust God utterly was given to me by a friend and co-worker in Boston, when I was in charge of the New England Sunday-school missionary field. In his boyhood his godly mother, with two children dependent on her, had small means of support, and at times she did not know where her next day's sustenance was to be found. Yet her faith in God never failed or faltered. She trusted him fully for herself and hers, whatever her circumstances were.

One evening, there came a call on her for help to a needy neighbor. She was sure that that appeal was one to which God would have her respond. She had, at that time, only fifty cents in the world, with two children to care for; but she had that, and God knew it, and yet this appeal as from him had come to her for what she

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had, and she would not refuse it. Her children had been already fed for the day. They needed nothing more till to-morrow. Like the widow of Zarephath, when Elijah, God's prophet, asked from her bread that seemed needed for her hungry child, this widow gave at God's call.

She gave her last fifty cents to the poor neighbor, who was to her as a messenger of God. Then she committed herself and hers trustfully to God, nothing doubting. As if to honor and approve her faith, that same evening a ring was heard at her door-bell. Going to the door, she found no one there, but an unaddressed envelope was found under the door, containing five dollars, which she took as a fresh gift from God, and thanked him for it most gratefully. That was the only like experience in her Christian life; yet this was enough to strengthen her faith, and the faith of her two sons, who were reared in God's service.

## XV

### Prayer of a Soldier Prisoner Answered

It has often been the case that one who, in the face of impending death, promised that his life, if spared, should be devoted to God's service, has forgotten that promise when God has given him safety. But, on the other hand, there have been those who made such a promise in the hour of peril, and afterwards redeemed it faithfully. Such an instance, in the case of a young army comrade of mine, stands out as memorable in my life recollections.

During all my three years of army service, my regiment was brigaded with the Twenty-fourth Massachusetts Regiment. During portions of the time that regiment had no chaplain, and I was privileged to be on terms of kindly intimacy with both its officers and its enlisted men. Among those

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men who, on Seabrook Island, in the spring of 1863, kept up a praying circle in order to promote their Christian life and growth, there was a young corporal who interested me by his intelligence, his frank and hearty ways, and his Christian devotedness. On the Sunday before he left for the war, he had stood up alone in his country home church and made a public profession of his Christian faith, and from that hour he had been faithful to his profession. He also had a good name for bravery and fidelity, and readiness to perform every soldier service to which he was summoned.

When, in the early summer of 1864, we were in Virginia as a part of the Army of the James, co-operating with the Army of the Potomac, General Butler called for a volunteer scout to venture through the enemy's lines, at Bermuda Hundred, and obtain information as to the position and movements of the enemy. In response to this call, this young corporal of the Twenty-

## Prayer of a Soldier Prisoner Answered

fourth volunteered, although it involved the peril of being taken and treated as a spy.

Having scouted successfully within the enemy's lines for two or three nights, and obtained important information that would have been invaluable to his commander, he was captured just as he was about attempting a return to his command. When captured and brought before a Confederate commander, the first proposition was to hang him at once as a spy, without a formal trial. But it was decided to confine him in the jail in Petersburg until he should be formally tried and condemned by a court-martial. In this emergency his chief prayer to God was not that his young life should be spared, but that he might be faithful even unto death; and God heard his prayer, and gave him strength.

Rapid movements of troops from Virginia to Georgia were frequent just then within the Confederate lines, in consequence of Sherman's march to the sea. The young captured scout was sent, with those having

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him in charge and with the evidence in his case, to Georgia, and he found himself facing death in the jail in Macon. It was then and there that the young soldier's new consecration to God occurred.

On his knees, behind the grated door of his hope-barred cell, he pleaded that he might have prolonged life and restored liberty. In no mere selfish love of life and liberty, he promised that, if his life be spared, it should be given wholly and heartily to the service of Christ. In speaking to me long afterward of this longing prayer, he said sincerely : "I told God that, if my life were spared, I should know *he* did it; for there was no other hope for me then ;" vain was the help of man.

At the very time that the officer having in charge his case, as an alleged spy, was preparing to come to the jail to take him out for trial, there was an alarm outside of the city. A portion of Sherman's army had made a circuitous movement in that direction. This officer, among others, was

## Prayer of a Soldier Prisoner Answered

hurried to the front, and in the changes that followed he was removed elsewhere, and the papers in the case of the captured scout were not to be found in Macon; and he was thenceforward held as an ordinary prisoner of war.

He could never have any doubt, from that hour onward, that, in response to his faith-filled prayer, God had given him prolonged life when, except to the eye of faith, such a thing seemed impossible. Although afterwards he had weary months of imprisonment and varied vicissitudes of soldier service, he was ever confident that he was living to serve God as he had promised to, and he longed still to be true and faithful unto death.

After the war I knew him, as, for years, he was striving to make good his vow of consecration; and I have rarely met a young soldier of Christ who was more zealously true to the blood-stained banner under which he was enrolled. Having secured a hundred dollars through lecturing

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on his army and prison experiences, he started with that sum to work his way through Phillips Academy at Andover. As he pursued his studies, he swept out the schoolroom, and performed other tasks, at fifteen cents an hour. In the early morning, and at other odd times, he did farm work outside of the village to eke out his support. At times he found difficulty, even with all his hard work, to support himself in the Academy.

On rising one morning he found himself without a cent of money in the world. Going to God, he prayed earnestly for help, and, a few minutes later, he found fifteen dollars between the pages of a book which he took up for study. Some friend, knowing his need, had taken that delicate way of aiding him. As the young student told of this fresh experience of God's goodness, he said gratefully, and in faith: "God will do so again, if it is best. If God wants me to stay at school, I have no fear but that he will find a way for me to get

## Prayer of a Soldier Prisoner Answered

along there." Why should any child of God feel any other way about his Father's care of him?

Counting his life as spared in order that he might devote it wholly to his Saviour's service, there was nothing that he enjoyed more than special work for his Master during the years when he was studying hardest to fit himself for future work. At Andover he taught in a mission school, took active part in prayer-meetings, and conversed on the subject of personal religion with his schoolmates. Two evenings in every week he spent with the pupils of his mission school, in order to promote their spiritual welfare. All this was not from a mere sense of duty, it was a delight to him. "How much real enjoyment it gives me to work for Jesus!" he said. "All other pleasures fade away, and are lost, by the side of it."

Again he wrote, "I don't see how any one can help doing all the good he can.... I have an insatiable thirst after perishing

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souls, and hope and pray that God will lead me to do good wherever I am. . . . I am thankful for the hope that perhaps, ere-long, I can throw aside all other things, and enter with my whole heart upon the work of saving souls. . . . My heart pants to be wholly engaged in my Master's service."

There was no room for doubt that he was faithful to the promise which he made when he prayed for prolonged life on his knees in Macon jail, as he faced the gallows. It was this way to the last.

At one time he told me of his disappointment, through failing health, in his plans for Christian effort. He had gone to a place in Vermont where there was great lack of such endeavor. He thought, as he said, that even *he* could do something there. But the day he reached the place he was taken ill, and had no power to do any work there. As he expressed it, "Jesus didn't need me in Vermont. He has never needed me anywhere, but he

## **Prayer of a Soldier Prisoner Answered**

has let me work for him sometimes. Oh, if I ever get well enough to work for him again, sha'n't I be thankful for it!"

But his health was hopelessly broken down by his long imprisonment in jail and stockade, his privations and endurances in swamp and dungeon, and his severe army service, and he had to give up his endeavor to enter the ministry or to engage in any active Christian labors. After a season in the Massachusetts General Hospital he returned to his old home in the country, and lay down to die.

To the last he had no thought of complaining, but he found constant cause of thanksgiving. When, in his humble home in Northern Massachusetts, he was simply waiting his summons for muster-out from earthly service, he told gratefully of God's goodness in sending to him, unexpectedly, relatives and friends whom he had desired to see once more.

Again, when he was pressed for means to supply his daily necessities, a sister came

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to him one morning to say that a letter had been received, covering a gift of thirty dollars for his use. A pleasant smile came over his face as he responded, "I prayed for money last night. It was the first time I had asked for that in a good while."

At the young soldier-scout's request I visited him in his home, and, as I sat by his dying-bed, he asked me if I would conduct his funeral service, and tell his old friends and neighbors of God's wonderful goodness to him. It was that truth which he wanted me to impress on those who had known him, and who were now to know of his experience. I did as he desired, and I never tire of repeating that story as an illustration of God's loving readiness to do for his children according to their needs and their faith.

## XVI

### How God Led the Leaders in the Centennial Exhibition

It is not merely help and guidance to an individual child of God that God gives in response to faith-filled prayer. If two or more are agreed as to what together they need in God's service, they may have confidence that he will hear and respond to them according to their need and their faith. And if God's children unitedly pray to him in behalf of a cause which in any true sense represents his interests or his honor, they may be sure that God is more interested in the object of their prayer than they are. An illustration of such a struggle as this, where I was privileged to know much of it, and, indeed, in which I had a certain part, is worthy of mention in this series of testimonies.

When the "United States Centennial

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Celebration and Exhibition of 1876," in Philadelphia, was arranged for, it was the first exhibition of really an international character that had been undertaken by this new nation of ours, and many an important practical question had necessarily to be met for the first time by those responsible for its management. One of these questions was the Sunday question. This grew to unexpected importance as the months progressed, and it finally became a center of moral and spiritual conflict.

Until that time, six days had, in this country, been counted an ordinary week's work. Places of amusement or of exhibition were "open every day in the week, *Sundays excepted*." This was taken as a matter of course. The first regulations decided on by the Centennial Commission, of representative men from every state and territory, appointed by Congress, were framed, two years before the exhibition, with the usual exception. But as the time for the opening drew near, there was a

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movement to secure the letting down of the bars that would close the great exhibition one day in seven.

Money-making was the main thing at the bottom of the Sunday-opening advocacy, whatever nominal plea was put forth by its representatives. Railroad companies coming into Philadelphia had millions at stake in the question at issue. Various other parties, whose larger or lesser gains were involved, were ready to aid any organized movement to induce the Centennial Commission to reverse its announced decision.

Of course, it would never do for these workers to say that it was a mere matter of dollars and cents that prompted their zeal. It sounded much better to talk of the interests of the working classes, who could come into Philadelphia on Sunday as on no other day in the week to receive good impressions in that great international educating agency now available only for a season. Thus in one way and another, a

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powerful, unscrupulous, and determined organization to effect the change was secured, and its work began to be felt.

There are always some in the community who are ready to work on the wrong side because it is wrong. Then there are men who will join with the evil-disposed, or will wish them success, because *they* can make money through the triumph of evil. Moreover, there are more or less social cranks, and weak-minded ministers, and other professed Christians, who can be drawn into the support of almost any measure—good or bad—to which a determined man urges them. Hence it is not to be wondered at that, at this time, petitions in favor of the Sunday opening of the exhibition were presented to the Centennial Commission signed by a great many bad men who would do wrong for its own sake; by a great many others who would do wrong when they were paid for it; by many flabby-minded men who had no positive opinions to adhere to with or without pay;

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and also, doubtless, by some conscientious but misguided men. As to the other side of the question, there was little need of petitions. Public sentiment on the involved issue was well understood. The better portion of the community was largely in favor of Sunday closing.

It was shrewdly planned, by the friends of Sunday opening, to secure by various means a majority of the Centennial Commission to favor rescinding the earlier vote for Sunday closing, and then to bring the matter up for decision, and press for an immediate vote, just before the opening day of the great exhibition. Once opened on Sundays with the approval of the Commission, it would be practically impossible to close it again. When the members came together just before the first of May, they found, on mutually conferring, that apparently a decided majority would vote for reversing the previous action. Then came a time of anxiety for the friends of Sabbath observance.

## Illustrative Answers to Prayer

I was so circumstanced at this time as to know much of the movements of both sides. On the day before the vote was to be taken, my old commander and friend, the President of the Commission, told me of the situation as he saw it. He said modestly: "I know, Chaplain, that you have more faith than I have that God gives special help in an emergency in answer to special prayer. So I want you to pray to-night for God's help in this contest." That very utterance showed this leader's faith. It was in itself the prayer, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

As we two were talking together at that time, an earnest and hard-working advocate of Sunday opening, a member of the Commission, came up, and said exultingly: "It's no use. We've got you. You'll find that out to-morrow." And, on the face of it, it looked so.

Before going home, I went to my office, and stated the case to my associate in

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editorial work, the Rev. Dr. George A. Peltz, a man of faith and prayer, and asked him to pray earnestly that night that God would help in this crisis. And there were godly members of the Commission who were praying the same prayer that night. When, on my knees that evening, I essayed to pray for God's help, my words strangely seemed to come back to me. It was as though God said, "There is no necessity for your prayers. I need not to be entreated of you. Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord!" It was a peculiar experience. I have never had anything just like it. Yet with it came the conviction that all was right. I realized that God was working.

Going to my office in the morning, I found my associate there, and, without speaking of what had happened to me, I asked him if he had remembered his promise of prayer. "Yes, indeed," he said, "and there was a singular occurrence as I attempted to pray." Then he told of

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his experience as almost identical with mine. He was confident, he said, that the Lord had taken this matter in hand.

The Commission met in Parlor C of the Continental Hotel. When I met its president there that day, he said to me: "Chaplain, there is a remarkable change here since last night. They are not so sure as they were of carrying their point. I doubt if they will."

Then I met Mr. George H. Corliss, of Rhode Island, whose mammoth engine was one of the wonders of the exhibition, and the motive-power of all its machinery. He, himself a devout and earnest Christian, was to present the majority report in renewed favor of Sunday closing. We had already talked this matter over together, and had, only the day before, spoken to each other of the evident majority in favor of the proposed change. He now spoke of the remarkable change that had come over several of the members since the day before, and he said he believed that the vote would

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be different from what had seemed probable twenty-four hours earlier.

After the other business of the day was completed, the two reports on Sunday-opening were presented, and discussion began. Mr. Corliss declared that, while he had enjoyed his work for the exhibition, and had fondly hoped for the success of the undertaking, if the exhibition was not to be closed on Sunday nothing was left of his best hopes but ashes, and he could only wish that all he had done for the Centennial was utterly blotted out.

Professor Campbell of Indiana, secretary of the Commission, reminded the Commissioners that state fairs throughout the country were uniformly closed on Sunday. He was sure, moreover, that if the Centennial Exhibition were open on Sunday, the slums of New York and Baltimore, and other cities, would be emptied into Philadelphia on that day, so that this city would be overrun with the viler classes in those communities.

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In favor of the minority report, claiming that the exhibition should be opened on Sundays, it was said that the laboring classes needed and desired it; that the exhibition itself was not like a place of amusement, but rather like a public library or art gallery, and that its influence would be ennobling on all who attended it; moreover, that anyhow it would pay. In favor of this report there were earnest words from at least one member of the Commission, who was honestly a believer in the Sunday opening on its merits. There was also more or less talk about "bigotry," and "intolerance," and "Puritanism," with the ordinary measure of sentimentalism concerning "the true and the beautiful." Of course, there was no such earnestness in favor of the Sunday opening as there was against it; for there was a lack, on that side, of the moral conviction which gives a man power in advocacy of the right.

General Hawley, of Connecticut, left the

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chair—as President of the Commission—to speak in favor of an observance of the American Sabbath. He insisted that the Commission was already pledged to that course by its previous action and utterances, and that it could not with honor, at this late day, reverse its decision. He believed that no American Congress was ever freighted with weightier responsibilities for the welfare of the American people than was this Commission in now considering the Sunday question. If the doors of the Centennial Exhibition were thrown open on Sunday, one of the safeguards of our nation would be thereby practically broken down. That step would prove the beginning of the end of our American Sabbath observance, and for a century to come men would point to this day's work in justification of a disregard of the traditions and customs of the nation in honoring the Christian Sabbath. Such a responsibility he was not willing to assume. He asked who of the Commission would dare to do so.

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General Hawley spoke with earnestness in favor of the observance of one day in seven, not merely as a religious duty, but as a necessity of man's physical and moral welfare. He said that if any people were to start in this world all by themselves, without any written or traditional law for their guidance, he believed that they would find, by experiment, that in the long run they could do more work and better in six days of a week than in seven. For the sake of the workingmen inside of the exhibition and outside, he wanted it closed on Sundays.

Colonel Holliday, afterwards Governor Holliday, of Virginia, a gallant Confederate officer, who had lost his right arm in the war, spoke eloquently in support of the views expressed by General Hawley. He asked if those men who talked of "the true and the beautiful" were unwilling to give one day to the contemplation of the true after giving six days to the study of the beautiful. Turning to Mr. Corliss, he said:

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"That magnificent engine of yours, sir, is indeed a thing of beauty. Each mighty revolution made by it as it puts and keeps in motion for six days in the week the varied machinery which covers more than fifteen acres of space, is *beautiful* beyond a question. But is there any *truth* in it? No, sir! Not unless, on the seventh day, that mighty engine stands silent before Almighty God."

Then came earnest words from Governor McCormick of Arizona. Those who remembered his activity twenty years before in Young Men's Christian Association work in New York City, or who recalled his brilliant address before the Third National Sunday-school Convention at Jayne's Hall, in Philadelphia, in 1859, were not surprised that he also pleaded eloquently for the wise and sacred observance of the Christian Sabbath.

When a friend of Sunday opening sneered at the others as "narrow-minded Puritans," a member of the Commission,

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whose position had not been known, called out, "I'm on that side, but don't call me a Puritan. In politics, I'm an old line Democrat; in religion, I'm a Universalist. There's not much Puritanism in me."

"Then you don't believe in any hell," said one.

"I believe you'll have a hell here in Philadelphia, if you open those exhibition gates Sundays," was the earnest and startling response.

The feeling had by this time reached a rare degree of intensity for any deliberative body. Members of the Commission who had thought lightly of the whole matter at first, or had been positively in favor of the Sunday opening, realized that a momentous issue was presented, and that they must accept the responsibility of acting for or against the right. There were loud calls of "Question! Question!" by those who were ready to finally record themselves.

At this moment an impressive incident occurred. Mr. Haynes, of Nevada, rose,

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and said: "Mr. President, before the question is taken, I wish to say a word. I feel like a returned prodigal, and I want to make a confession. More than twenty years ago, I went out from an Eastern home to the Far West. I have lived since then beyond the Rocky Mountains, where we hardly have a Sabbath, and where other than the best moral influences are all about us. But, as I have listened here this afternoon, old memories have come back to me." Here the speaker struggled with strong emotion, and he continued with choking voice: "All these truths were familiar to me long ago, and it seems to me again to-day that I hear them repeated as I used to listen to them from the lips of my sainted mother, as, every evening, I kneeled by her side in prayer. I want to give my vote in favor of observing the Christian Sabbath."

The effect of this remarkable speech was overpowering. It seemed to represent the uplifting of the whole Commission in moral

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character and tone, and men who would an hour before have voted to open the exhibition for seven days in the week recorded their names heartily in favor of Sunday closing when the vote was called. Even the member of the Commission, who had been counted a representative of the largest monied interests pressing for the change, voted in favor of the report of Mr. Corliss. The vote stood twenty-seven for closing to nine for opening; and so the question was settled—and settled right. God had led the leaders. God be praised for this result!

## XVII

### Help in the Night Prayed for, and Sent

It matters not what is the need of a child of God, or when or where he experiences that need. He is privileged to make it known to his Father, and to trust that it will be supplied according to that Father's love and wisdom. Of course, the supply will be through natural means, but ever as the natural is supernaturally controlled. Illustrations of this truth are many and varied, but they all are alike consistent with the principles on which every faith-filled prayer must rest.

Many years ago a distinguished clergyman and college officer gave me an incident illustrating such prayer and its answer in his own family, which profoundly impressed me, and which is worthy of men-

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tion in this record of experiences. While its first mention to me was many years ago, I have, on the very day that I write this chapter, verified my recollection of the incident by hearing it anew from the person who offered the prayer and received the answer.

My friend's residence was at a little distance from the college, in a somewhat secluded spot, quite apart from the traveled highway. He was temporarily away from his home. His wife and children, with an invalid friend of the wife, were, in a sense, alone in the house. In the dead of night, the wife was started from her sleep by hearing, on the floor below, the iron bolt of the parlor window-shutters thrown back. At once she realized that a burglar, or other intruder, was forcing an entrance. What should she do? How could she secure help?

This was about the time when Professor Huxley had been lecturing and writing on the unwisdom of expecting direct answers

## **Help in the Night Prayed for, and Sent**

to specific prayers. The thought of this flashed on the mind of this startled believer, awakened out of her sleep. And the other thought quickly followed: "God can help me now, and I will pray to him." Then the prayer went up: "Lord, send a policeman to our rescue." The policeman on the beat nearest that residence was accustomed to visit the grounds at certain hours of the night, and therefore the desire was a natural one, on her part, that he should appear just at this juncture.

Just then there was heard the report of a pistol in front of the house. Other shots followed. The startled believer sprang from her bed to look out of her front window. By the bright moonlight she could see signs of confusion in the shrubbery near the house; and then a little boat pushing out on the stream beyond the grounds. Soon a policeman appeared before the house, and called out, saying that burglars had been discovered in the house. He asked to be admitted, so as to see what

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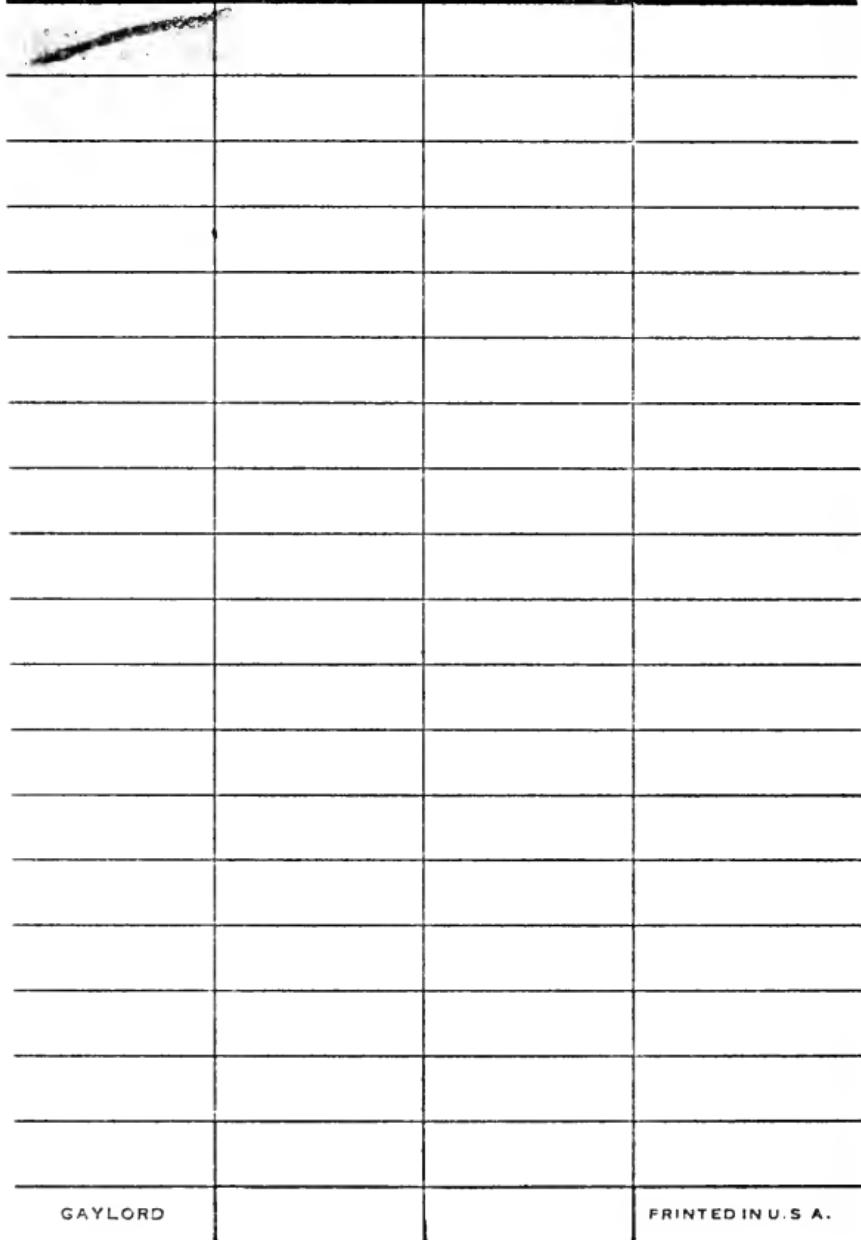
harm had been done. On being admitted, he told his story.

He had visited the house and grounds on his usual rounds. Finding all right he was returning to the highway when suddenly, as he said, something told him to go back and look again. This must have been about the time that the believer was asking God to send a policeman for her protection. As he neared the house again, he saw a man entering the opened parlor window. The pistol-shots were fired on both sides. The burglar fled to the river, and attempted to escape, but, being wounded, he was disabled, and drowned. He left burglars' tools behind him. On his person were found treasures taken from neighboring houses, as others would have been from this one but for this interruption.

Such an incident might have had no weight with Professor Huxley; but it confirmed the faith of that praying believer and of others. Is it not good to believe, and to know?



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